

In this issue...

Toxic Journalism – Response to AP Article on Biosolids

Page 2

Davidov Elected to Maryland Recyclers Network Board

Page 3

Inside look at Recycle America's Single Stream Facility in Elkridge

Page 5



printed on recycled paper

North America Waste to Energy Conference – NAWTEC

The 16th annual North American Waste to Energy (NAWTEC) Conference, the leading industry technical conference and trade show focusing on municipal waste-to-energy (WTE), was held May 19-21, 2008 in Philadelphia, PA. The nearby location allowed more Authority staff members to attend and join a record number of conference participants to learn about the latest trends, technology and research in the WTE industry. Members from several Authority jurisdictions also attended the conference.

During the opening session, attendees heard from three speakers. Ed Foulke of OSHA gave a passionate presentation on safety in the industry and the importance of maintaining the exemplary record it has established. Steve Passage of Veolia Environmental Services, a company with more than 20 years experience in WTE, discussed current waste trends in the United States and the impact that several recently decided court cases and new legislation will have on the industry. Inge Johanssen, Secretary, Swedish Working Group on Waste-to-Energy spoke on the trends of waste-to-energy in Europe. He noted that WTE offers regional resource management, eliminating long-distance waste hauling and reducing the volume of material going to landfills.

During the opening plenary session and throughout the conference, the role of WTE in reducing reliance on landfills and the growing acceptance of WTE in Europe were discussed. In many European countries, the WTE facility is accepted as part of the overall resource management program for cities and regions.

Authority staff also toured the nearby Wheelabrator Falls Township WTE. The Wheelabrator Falls plant (1,500 tons per day) is a privately financed and operated facility that generates over 55MW of consistent, renewable energy for New Jersey.

With a greater focus on the environmental benefits of waste-to-energy and the increased costs associated with long haul disposal, WTE is becoming valuable as part of the overall integrated management of waste.

The 2009 conference is planned for May 18- 20 in Chantilly, Virginia.

For more information about the WTE facilities in Maryland please visit www.nmwda.org.

Mark Your Calendars

Wastecon 2008, October 21-23, 2008, Tampa Florida
For more information go to: wastecon.swana.org

National Recycling Coalition Annual Congress & Expo, September 21-24,
Pittsburgh, PA. For more information go to: nrc-recycle.org

**October
21st – 23rd**

**September
21st – 24th**

Response to AP Article on Biosolids

The following article was written in response to an Associate Press article condemning the use of biosolids to reduce childhood lead poisoning. In spite of many inaccuracies, the AP article was widely quoted, reprinted by the local press, and even mentioned by U.S. Senator Barbara Boxer (CA) during a Congressional hearing on water quality. As a result of many complaints, the intercession of the Johns Hopkins School of Medicine, and an article exposing the AP writers' bias (excerpted below), the AP issued an apology. We have edited the paper to fit the space available. For a complete copy, please contact the Authority.

Toxic Journalism

An Analysis of the Associated Press Article on the use of Compost to Mitigate Lead Poisoning in Baltimore

Charles Hooks, Crockett+Hooks
William Toffey, Mid-Atlantic
Biosolids Association
Chris Peot, DC WASA

Summary

On April 13, 2008, the Associated Press moved a feature story by John Heilprin and Kevin Vineys to its print and electronic subscribers titled "Sludge-Poisoned Land." The story claimed that dangerous "sewage sludge" was used on yards in "poor, black neighborhoods" in Baltimore, Maryland, as part of a study to test whether it would protect children from lead poisoning in the soil. A much shorter article by Vineys, "What makes up sludge? No one can say for sure," accompanied the story.

The "Poisoned Land" story received front-page coverage in daily newspapers across the nation, was featured on radio and TV, received prominent coverage on major Internet news sites and blogs and even attracted international media coverage. The story provoked a firestorm of protest from editorial writers, local, state and national politicians and activists from a wide spectrum of environmental, civil rights and social justice organizations who cited the Baltimore research as the latest example of the victimization of poor and minority members of our society.

There was just one problem with the Heilprin and Vineys story: It was false.

Not false in the sense that the authors made up incidents or quotes or relied on forged documents as exemplified by Jayson Blair of the New York Times, Christopher Newton of the Associated Press, Jack Kelly of USA Today and Dan Rather of CBS News. This fraud was far more difficult to detect in that it artfully combined much more subtle journalistic devices of deception. Most readers would not catch such devices unless they had actual knowledge of the facts.

Responsible and careful editors, however, should have been alert to such dishonest journalism, something for which the editors at the Associated Press should be called to account.

The following analysis highlights the major flaws in the AP stories:

Calculated to Produce Outrage

The lead sentences in the main story were skillfully constructed to grab the reader's attention, provoke outrage and discredit any conflicting information that might appear later in the story. Phrases included "fertilizer made from human and industrial waste," spread on "yards in poor, black neighborhoods," and that families "were never told about any harmful ingredients"

The second paragraph called the material used "sewage sludge" and implied that the low-income families were induced to participate in a dangerous experiment in exchange for "food coupons as well as free lawns."

In fact, the material used on the yards was not sewage sludge, which is the untreated semi-solid residue



In 2004, Orgro compost was selected to be used in a new park next to the White House.

resulting from an early stage of the wastewater treatment process. It was compost, a soil amendment and fertilizer that is approved for residential, commercial and agricultural uses and available through retail and wholesale outlets. The AP writers knew the material was not sewage sludge, since they had spent nearly a year researching this story and had interviewed numerous wastewater treatment professionals, toured water treatment facilities and observed the agricultural land application of biosolids—which is the accepted term for the EPA-approved fertilizer and soil amendment that results from the extensive treatment of sewage sludge.

The material used on the Baltimore lawns was a compost product sold locally to the public. This particular compost, called Eckology/Orgro, used biosolids as a raw material, along with wood chips. Commercial composting is a carefully managed process that uses beneficial organisms to break down the organic material and kill harmful pathogens. Compost is rated as a Class A product by the EPA, which means that the treatment process has eliminated pathogens that may carry over from wastewater. Compost also meets standards for metal contaminants, so that it is approved for all gardening and agricultural uses. Compost from biosolids is produced

by hundreds of municipalities and private companies in the U. S. and is widely used by commercial landscapers and by millions of homeowners in their gardens, shrubs and lawns.

Heilprin acknowledged that he knew the difference between Class A compost and sewage sludge in an April 24 interview on NPR's News & Notes program. He made no such distinction, however, in his "Poisoned Land" story.

Harmful Ingredients

Almost midway into the story, the authors quote one of the researchers as explaining the safety of the product and its value in reducing lead. There is still no acknowledgment, however, that the researcher is talking about compost. The reader is left to believe that the researcher is talking about the safety

of untreated sewage sludge, which would certainly undermine his credibility to most readers.

The Precautionary Principle

The idea that because "there may be some" pathogens or chemicals in biosolids that the product should be avoided until it can be proven "safe" indicates that the writers of the AP story subscribe to the "precautionary principle." In its most extreme application, this concept, which represents a minority position within the scientific community, holds that it is better to forgo the benefits of a product or technology if there is a chance, however slight, of harm to health or the environment.

Precaution is an appealing concept to the layperson, until the consequences for modern life are fully considered. For example, there are those who say that because

chlorine is toxic in certain quantities, it should be banned from our nation's water supply. But chlorine, in minute quantities, is essential to disinfecting public drinking water. The public health consequences of banning it are worse than the theoretical risks of having minute quantities in our municipal water supply. That calculation is a part of "risk assessment," balancing theoretical detrimental effects against real benefits for the common good. That is what the EPA did in developing the Part 503 regulations and continues to do today. There are risks to banning the land application of biosolids and the residential and commercial use of compost, since alternatives—landfill disposal, incineration, waste-to-energy—all have environmental, health and community impacts.

The Maryland Recyclers Coalition has a New Name and a New Board Member.

During the closing hours of the 4th Maryland Recyclers Coalition(MRC)/ Mid-Atlantic Chapter of SWANA annual joint conference, the MRC Board of Directors approved a new name and further focused the organization's vision. MRC, which consists of a group of private and public sector recyclers, officials and citizens will now be known as the Maryland Recyclers Network (MRN).

According to Brian Ryerson, who recently completed his term as MRN President, the name change reflects a subtle change in the vision for the group.

"The new direction is to address the needs of local municipal governments, state government, non-profits and the private sector

by providing a think tank that offers solutions. We are hopeful that more organizations will utilize the MRN as a resource than has been the case in the past. Even our monthly meetings will take on a new direction with more educational aspects and less formal business matters," noted Mr. Ryerson.

The MRN is a member-based organization that promotes reduction, reuse and recycling of material resources at home and at work and encourages the purchase of recycled materials. The Network's website contains relevant contact information and resources for planning and improving recycling programs.

The Board also added a new member to the approved slate

of directors for the coming year. Robin Davidov, Executive Director of the Authority, will serve a one-year term. Ms. Davidov brings a wealth of experience in resource management and is viewed as a knowledge source for the private and public sectors in the region.

More information about the Maryland Recyclers Network can be found at: <http://www.marylandrecyclers.org/> or by calling (888) 496-3196. Additional information about the support that the Authority provides to its members for recycling can be found at www.mdrecycles.org.



Fats, Oils, and Grease as a Viable Feedstock

Fats, Oils, and Greases (FOG) are waste products produced by fast food restaurants, hotels, prisons, schools, and others during food production. FOG is divided into two categories yellow grease and trap grease. Yellow grease is recycled vegetable oil, while trap grease is the dirtier waste grease that is trapped before it goes down the sewer. Both yellow and trap grease can be used as valuable feedstocks for generating biodiesel through a process called transesterification.

Transesterification combines an alcohol (like methanol) with the triglyceride oils contained in vegetable oils, animal fats, or recycled greases, forming fatty acid alkyl esters (biodiesel) and glycerin. After this reaction, biodiesel has many similar properties to that of petroleum based diesels, and can be substituted or mixed with petroleum based diesels for most uses.

The Authority has been researching the feasibility of a FOG program in our member jurisdictions. This program could range from assisting in the construction of a FOG treatment facility that can be sold to biodiesel manufacturers to assisting schools in burning FOG in commercially available multi-fuel waste oil burners.

FOG is most frequently collected and treated as septic waste in waste water treatment facilities across the state. The Authority contacted various waste water treatment plants and learned that FOG is not managed in a specialized process, either because not enough grease comes in to make it a priority or it's just more convenient to manage FOG with the rest of the septic waste.

In order to manufacture biodiesel, the management of FOG would have to change by collective cooperation among FOG producers, waste haul-

ers and biodiesel manufactures. The Authority continues researching the feasibility of a FOG project in our member jurisdictions, as an opportunity to create a biodiesel feedstock. Legislation has been passed that provides a \$0.50/lb tax credit for recycled oils and gives economic incentive to companies. Additionally, increased use of biodiesel will alleviate the need for petroleum based diesels.

For more information please contact Chip Lanser or Andrew Kays at: (410) 333-2730.

(Note: The Authority's summer intern, Chip Lanser, contributed to this article. Chip will be a Junior at the University of Notre Dame this fall.)

MRC & SWANA's Mid-Atlantic Chapter 4th Annual Joint Conference Highlights

The Maryland Recyclers Coalition (MRC) and the Mid-Atlantic Chapter of the Solid Waste Association of North America (SWANA) held the 4th annual joint conference at the University of Maryland, College Park on June 25th and 26th. The two day meeting provided attendees with the opportunity to share ideas with solid waste and recycling industry professionals throughout Maryland. Exhibitors from Maryland and some surrounding states also provided attendees with information about vendors and services available.

The conference began with a keynote address from John Skinner, Executive Director and CEO of the Solid Waste Association of North America (SWANA). Mr. Skinner deliv-

ered an inspiring message, encouraging participants to continue their work in integrated solid waste and the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions.

The MRC awards and annual meeting were held concurrent with the SWANA morning technical session. The first sessions focused on alternative energy and included discussions on landfill gas to vehicle fuel, alternative energy generation at the Atlantic County Landfill, and biomass technology for energy from waste. This year the plenary session focused on the ever-growing arena of carbon credits and carbon off-sets. The first day's afternoon sessions focused on globalization versus localization, with a specific

discussion of China's impacts on markets for recycled materials. International waste-to-energy, landfill gas and its role in groundwater contamination, and expanding the Cherry Island Landfill cells over soft river sediment foundation and still maintain stability and permit requirements were topics delved into during the afternoon. The final sessions of the day discussed Maryland's carbon source reduction system and climate and greenhouse gas discussions, including climate action plans being implemented across the U.S., Howard County's steps toward a climate action plan (including a total carbon footprint calculation), and federal greenhouse gas initiatives.

continued on page 6

Inside the Recycle America Single Stream Facility in Elkridge

The Recycle America single stream recycling facility in Elkridge, Maryland is a 50,000 square foot facility which accepts single stream recyclables. Paper is collected with commingled materials (plastics, glass, metals, etc) in the same container. The facility accepts recyclables from Anne Arundel, Howard, Carroll Counties, Baltimore City, the City of Annapolis, Washington D.C., and other areas. More and more counties and cities (as well as busi-

nesses) are converting to single stream verses dual stream recycling because it is more convenient to place all the recyclables in one container.

Currently, the facility processes approximately 1,000 tons per day and averages 70 tons per hour with less than 3% residual which cannot be recycled. Eighty percent of the material is separated by machine and the remainder is hand sorted.

According to Bob McCrann the facility manager, secret to the facility are the 1,500 rubber discs in screens that rotate at various speeds and are positioned at certain distances apart to separate the paper and cardboard material from the plastics, glass, and metals.

The success of any single stream recycling program depends upon preventing contaminants in the recycling container.

Example of Materials Accepted in a Single Stream Recycling Program

YES	NO
newspaper	waxy cardboard
mixed paper	styrofoam
cardboard	plate glass, mirrors
cans	scrap metal (pots & pans)
glass jars	
plastic soda bottles	

Videos Worth Watching

Garbage DVD (The Works)

"Garbage" is a fascinating premiere episode of THE WORKS from The History Channel! "In the series premiere episode, GARBAGE, Daniel finds out what happens to the 102 tons of garbage each of us throws away in our lifetime. . . you'll never look at GARBAGE the same way after this episode of THE WORKS." To purchase a copy of the DVD go to: <http://store.aetv.com> and do a search for "Garbage, The Works"

Garbage Power

"One Man's Trash Could Be an Energy Treasure" -- NBC Nightly News -- Wednesday, July 30, 2008, Reported by: Anne Thompson. Covanta Energy, Fairfax VA -- Waste to Energy News Segment. It features a brief interview with Tony Orlando, CEO and President of Covanta Energy in Fairfield, NJ. To view this news segment go to: <http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/21134540/vp/25933859#25933859>





Recycling Tips

Here are ideas for recycling cell phones, batteries and attachments

- 1 Recycling cell phones, batteries and gear: Sprint is offering postage-paid mailing labels through Keep America Beautiful (kab.org) ... funds generated go to Keep America Beautiful.
- 2 Petsmart gives out free mailing bags for cell phones...and donates money to animal shelters.
- 3 Check with local schools, many collect cell phones as fund raisers.



continued from page 4

Day two of the conference began with presentations on implementation of California's climate change law and greening collection systems, such as using natural gas in the fleet vehicles. There was also discussion about carbon calculators, both the EPA WARM model and a model HDR is creating which will be undergoing peer review this fall. The conference ended with a tour of the

LEED certified building on the University College Campus.

The Authority was a sponsor of the Conference again this year. We had a table at the Conference and offered members the opportunity to present their recycling and source reduction literature and plan to do so again next year.

For more information on the Mid-Atlantic Chapter of SWANA please go to: <http://www.swana-midatl.org/>.

For more information on the MRC please go to: <http://www.marylandrecyclers.org>.



WASTEWATCH

Tower II – Suite 402, 100 S. Charles Street
Baltimore, Maryland 21201-2705
(410) 333-2730 / Fax: (410) 333-2721
E-mail: authority@nmwda.org
Website: www.nmwda.org

WasteWatch is published quarterly by the Northeast Maryland Waste Disposal Authority, an independent agency of the State of Maryland governed by its Member Jurisdictions – Anne Arundel County, Baltimore City, Baltimore County, Carroll County, Frederick County, Harford County, Howard County and Montgomery County.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Robin B. Davidov

MEMBERS

James M. Irvin
Chairman

Howard County

Ronald E. Bowen
Treasurer

Anne Arundel County

Edward C. Adams, Jr.
Baltimore County

J. Michael Evans
Carroll County

Michael G. Marschner
Frederick County

Robert B. Cooper
Harford County

Daniel E. Locke
Montgomery County

James M. Harkins
Maryland Environmental Service